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To Hon Daniel Fish
from his friend
the author
Joseph W. Burdett
Aug 1973

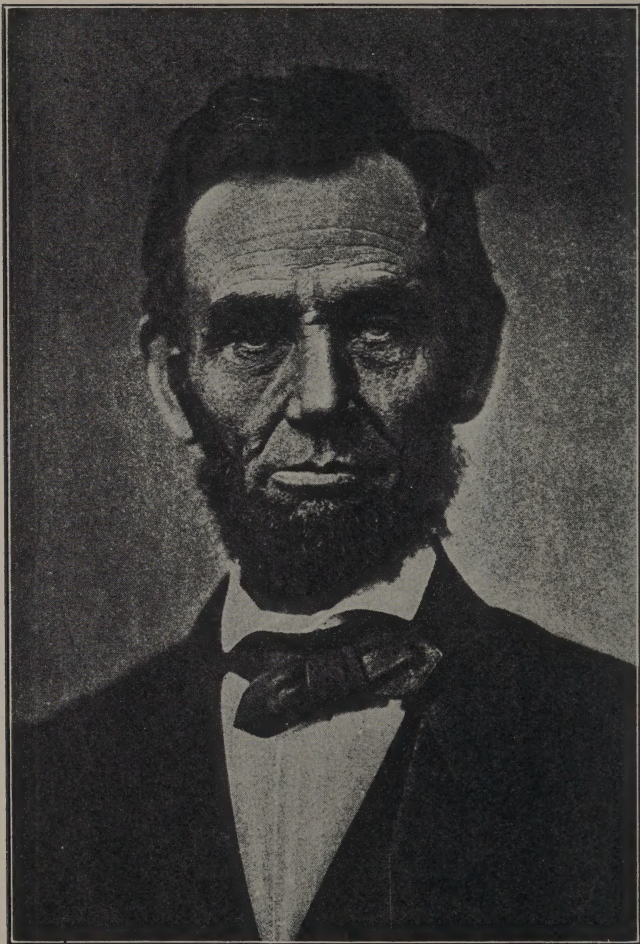
HOBBIES

AN ADDRESS ON THE COLLECTION
OF LINCOLN LITERATURE

BY
JOSEPH BENJAMIN OAKLEAF
OF THE ILLINOIS BAR

DELIVERED FEBRUARY 12TH, 1913, BEFORE A
BODY OF MEN EACH OF WHOM HAD
A HOBBY OF SOME SORT

AUGUSTANA BOOK CONCERN
Printers and Binders
ROCK ISLAND, ILLINOIS
1923



ABRAHAM LINCOLN



HOBBIES

Through all time, so far as we have been informed, most men have had a hobby of some sort. It seems that the business, professional, scientific and other men seek for some diversion outside of their beaten path to act as a sort of safety valve, and such sought for diversions are greater now than at any other period of the world's history. We are now living in a very rapid age. What would have taken our forefathers weeks to accomplish we accomplish now between the rising and setting sun. The various means of locomotion have eliminated distances; we have scarcely left our office or place of business until we have arrived at our objective point;

and thus our brains are continually in a whirl with business activities. It is true that those who are believers in church and enjoy church work, have one day out of the seven in which to set the mind at rest and get consolation and rest. They, too, are inspired with the thought that after the end of this busy, active life, there is rest and reward for those who have their lamps burning and await the coming of the bridegroom. Many thousand others, however, do not seek consolation and rest from business activities by entering the House of Worship on the Lord's Day, but seek the field, the running brook, and there commune with nature; still others will be found on the golf links, chasing the little white sphere around the field like "the mother who is chasing her boy around the room"; others will be satisfied to sit on the bleachers under a hot July sun and see their favorite team in the national pastime win its laurels. Yet, notwithstanding these many diversions, countless numbers of men and women will resort

to a hobby of some sort to give additional diversion and direct their minds into channels that will serve to lighten the burden of the active, professional or business life.

I have talked with men who have had a hobby and have found that it was curiosity or love of some particular thing which prompted the starting of that hobby. As a rule, it did not begin as a hobby, in the first place, but became a hobby after the curiosity had been aroused or the love for the particular line had been fixed.

I, in common with many thousands of people in the United States and elsewhere, am a true lover of Lincoln. I can well remember, as a boy, only a few years of age, the picture issued shortly after the death of Abraham Lincoln, a copy of which hung in the sitting room of my home. It was a picture of Washington and Lincoln with the inscription: "Washington made, and Lincoln saved, our Country." My home town (Moline, Illinois) being one of the stations on the

“underground railroad,” and one of the strongest abolition towns in the country, I heard naturally much about Lincoln, and as a boy I always admired the kind face and pleasing personality of the martyred president, and as I grew to manhood, the boyish admiration grew into reverence.

Previous to the time that Nicolay and Hay wrote their biography of Abraham Lincoln, I had read a life or two of Lincoln, and many different incidents in magazines and papers, but the publication by Nicolay and Hay was hailed with great delight, for much that had been hidden was brought to light by them. It is certainly true that we cannot study the life of a great man, to advantage, unless at the same time we study the events of the times in which that man lived and the men with whom he was connected. The ten volumes that were published by the Century Company were the result of the brains of Lincoln’s private secretaries.

In this work, Nicolay and Hay have a

monument to them greater than any amount of money placed in a marble or precious stone.

I read in the Century periodical from month to month, for twelve months, the life of Lincoln and the men and times with which he was connected, and when the last number of the magazine arrived which closed the history, I re-read it, and having taken up law as my profession and became acquainted with annotations in the text books, it occurred to me that I would like to be the possessor of all the books to which Nicolay and Hay referred in their foot notes, for it seemed to me that if they could weave such a splendid history by the use of their references and the material culled from the books to which they referred, it would be a pleasure to own such books. I thought I would like to have all of the biographies of Lincoln, at least, and I then concluded that a hundred volumes would probably be the extent of my library. I began collecting in a modest manner and did not correspond with any one who was collect-

ing, nor did I know of any one who had the hobby. I made notations from the foot notes of the work of Nicolay and Hay and I went to our Public Library and finally my name became known to the old book dealers and I received catalogues, and then my hobby really started. While I was endeavoring to procure the books that I had noted, others became known to me and my hundred volumes finally grew to four hundred, then to five hundred, six hundred and so on, but my gala day came at the close of the year 1900. It was while visiting with the genial Frank M. Morris of Chicago, in his famous book shop, that he informed me that a man by the name of Fish of Minneapolis had compiled a bibliography. Upon my return home, I wrote to the Hon. Daniel Fish, with a great deal of misgiving, and inquired as to his bibliography, and out of the goodness of his great heart he sent me a copy of *Lincolniana*. If I had known how extensive a complete collection of *Lincolniana* would be when I first began collecting,

I am satisfied that I would not have had the heart to begin the work. But thus it is, that where we are not allowed to peer into the future, we undertake work which we will carry on successfully, not knowing what the end means but keep plodding on from day to day until finally we reach the goal.

My collection of Lincolnia was known locally, and at one time I appeared before the high school of our City to say something about Lincoln. At that time I tendered the use of my library to any one who desired to make a research, and a young man by the name of Philip Joseph availed himself of the opportunity and delivered an oration entitled: "The Fame of Abraham Lincoln." The paper was well written, and I had it published for him and sent a copy to Mr. Fish, who asked me to send a copy to his good friend, Judd Steward. This I did, and in that way reached the heart and hand of that genial Lincoln enthusiast.

My collection, now, has grown to something over fifteen hundred items

and it is still growing, slowly but steadily.

With the death of Major Lambert, last summer, there passed away the prince of Lincoln collectors. His collection cannot be duplicated and now Judd Stewart stands at the head of the collectors of Lincolniana, and he well deserves the place for he has always been willing to lend a helping hand to his brother collectors.

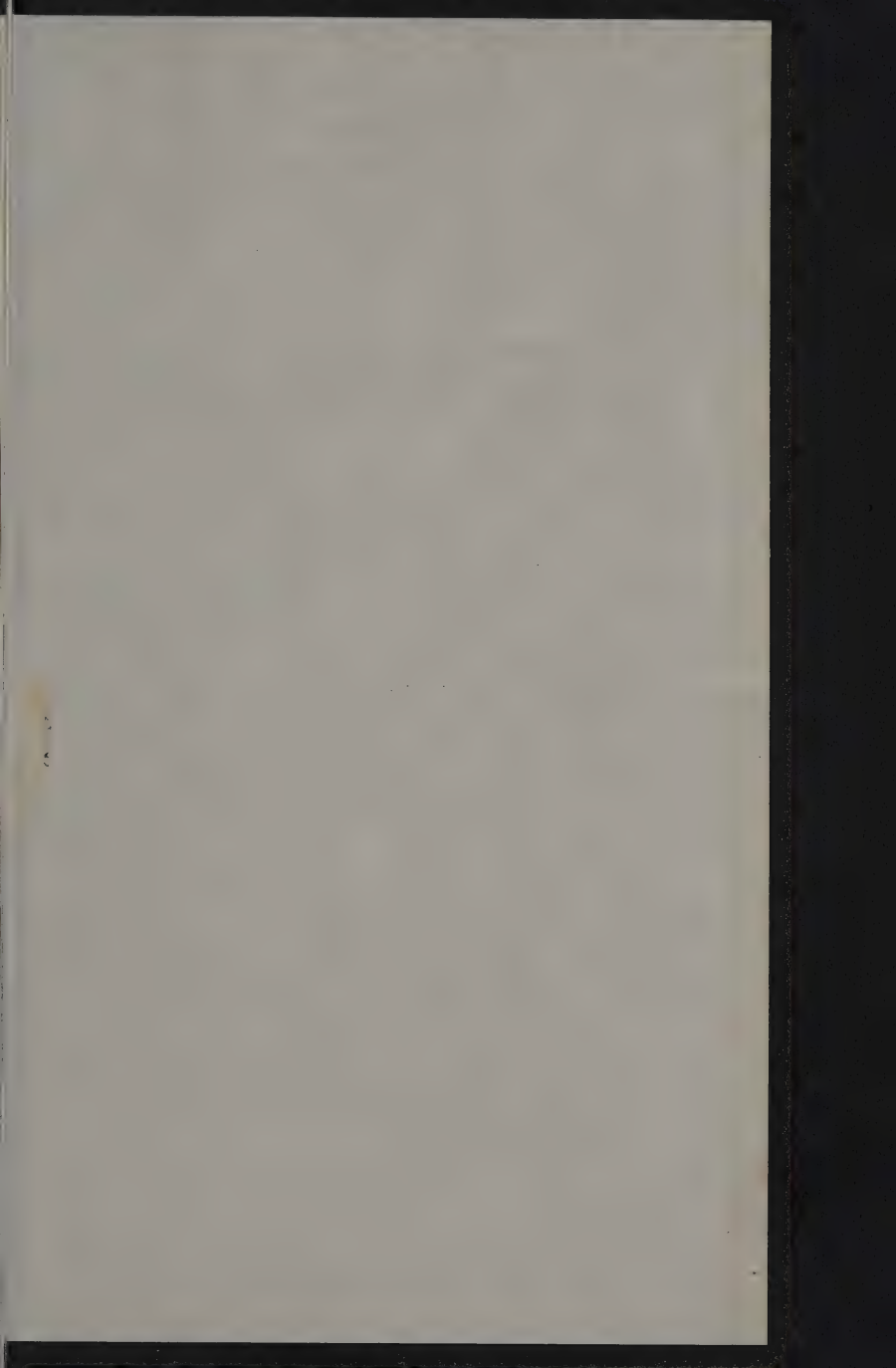
Not only has the collection of Lincolniana been a pleasure to me, but the acquaintance that I have formed through my hobby is really worth to me many fold more than my collection. There is not a city, or town, of any note in the United States, where I have not some one with whom I have corresponded or talked on the subject, and if, by chance, I am a sojourner in a city or town for an hour or two, I always refer to my hobby address book and am sure to find some one interested, and I am always welcome, for the usual salutation of the stranger will be: "Any man who loves Lincoln is a friend of mine."

I have never placed my collection on a commercial basis. I mean by that, that I would not pay a high price for an item just for the sake of having it in my collection, for I have learned that in the course of time I would get the item for the mere asking. I remember definitely of many items having come into my collection for which I had been tempted to pay a big price, but by biding my time they have come to me with the compliments of some one or through the intimation of some good friend. I have always made it a habit to keep all the correspondence concerning any certain item about which I was inquiring, and when the item is finally received I preserve the correspondence, which makes a sort of a history of the item and the work that was necessary to bring it into my possession.

Living in Rock Island County, where Lincoln was sworn into the service of the United States as a volunteer in the Blackhawk War, and within sight of the Village made famous by Blackhawk, and, so far as we can learn, the only time that

Lincoln was ever in Rock Island County, we feel that Rock Island County has had much to do with the bringing of fame to Abraham Lincoln. It was in this County that the first bridge spanned the Mississippi, and the company building the bridge retained Abraham Lincoln to help them in their efforts to retain the bridge in the suit brought by the rivermen, and out of which Lincoln received one of his first large fees. It was at Fort Armstrong in Rock Island County, that Dred Scott, as body servant of Dr. Emerson, was stationed for a number of years, and on account of Dred Scott's residence there, his case came before the Supreme Court of the United States.

There are now many who are interested in the collecting of Lincolniana, with new ones coming to the front continually. To such, I extend the hand of Lincoln fellowship with my heart in it, knowing that what they do will not only be of service to themselves, but to the city or community in which they live and of benefit to their friends.



MOORSFIELD ON RIVER CHAZY

CHAMPLAIN, NEW YORK

August 26, 1923.

J. B. Oakleaf, Esq.,
Moline, Ill.
My dear Oakleaf:—

I note that in your mention of Father you make a curiously inaccurate statement, which I feel I should correct for your personal information. You state on Page 13 of "Hobbies" that Father "was a resident of Springfield at the time of the breaking out of the war and on account of his leaning towards the Confederacy, left Springfield." The truth is quite different.

Father was Northern in every fibre of his being; born in Beverly, Mass., November 25, 1836; in 1856 he went to Springfield, Ill., to become a bookkeeper with Chas. Hurst & Co., and later John Williams; he was a member of the Springfield Greys there. In September, 1860, he went to Mobile, Ala., at the instigation of a friend of his whose Uncle was a cotton factor in Mobile and who wanted a bookkeeper and who made what Father considered a very attractive offer. Father said that his friend and he left Springfield with the feeling that the future held great possibilities for them. For a year after his arrival in Mobile things were quiet and although the war had started in April, 1861, it was felt but little; and that it was only when he made preparations for coming North that he awoke to the seriousness of the situation. He had corresponded with Robert Lincoln and with friends North, and it was intimated by Southern friends that he had better not make the attempt. But he joined the Mobile Cadets, a military organization for the defence of the State, and later this organization was mustered into the Confederate army. He often spoke of the lack of interest he seemed to have paid to the great political questions of the day; and that he rather drifted with events. He had no leaning towards the Confederacy and left Springfield solely for business reasons, without seeing the conflict looming on the horizon. Father left quite a complete story of his experiences in Springfield, Mobile and during the war.

With every good wish,

Sincerely yours,

HUGH McLELLAN

In closing, I would like to mention all of those who have been very kind to me, but I cannot do so for the list would be too long, but I must not close without mentioning a few, and they are:

Major W. H. Lambert, who has now gone to his reward, a better man, I think, never lived; Judd Stewart, the able assistant to the President of the American Smelting Company; Hon. Charles W. McLellan, of Champlain, New York, who was a resident of Springfield at the time of the breaking out of the war and on account of his leaning toward the Confederacy, left Springfield, but who is now one of the strongest admirers of Abraham Lincoln; Hon. Daniel Fish, of Minneapolis, whom I have had the pleasure of entertaining in my home and with whom I have made a trip through the Lincoln country; J. W. Burton, of Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, in whose home I have been entertained and feasted my eyes upon his splendid collection of Lincolniana. These were my early friends in the beginning of my hobby, and I can

now count many others who are near to me and who have reciprocated most generously the favor extended to them.

*100 copies printed,
of which this is*

No. 8

